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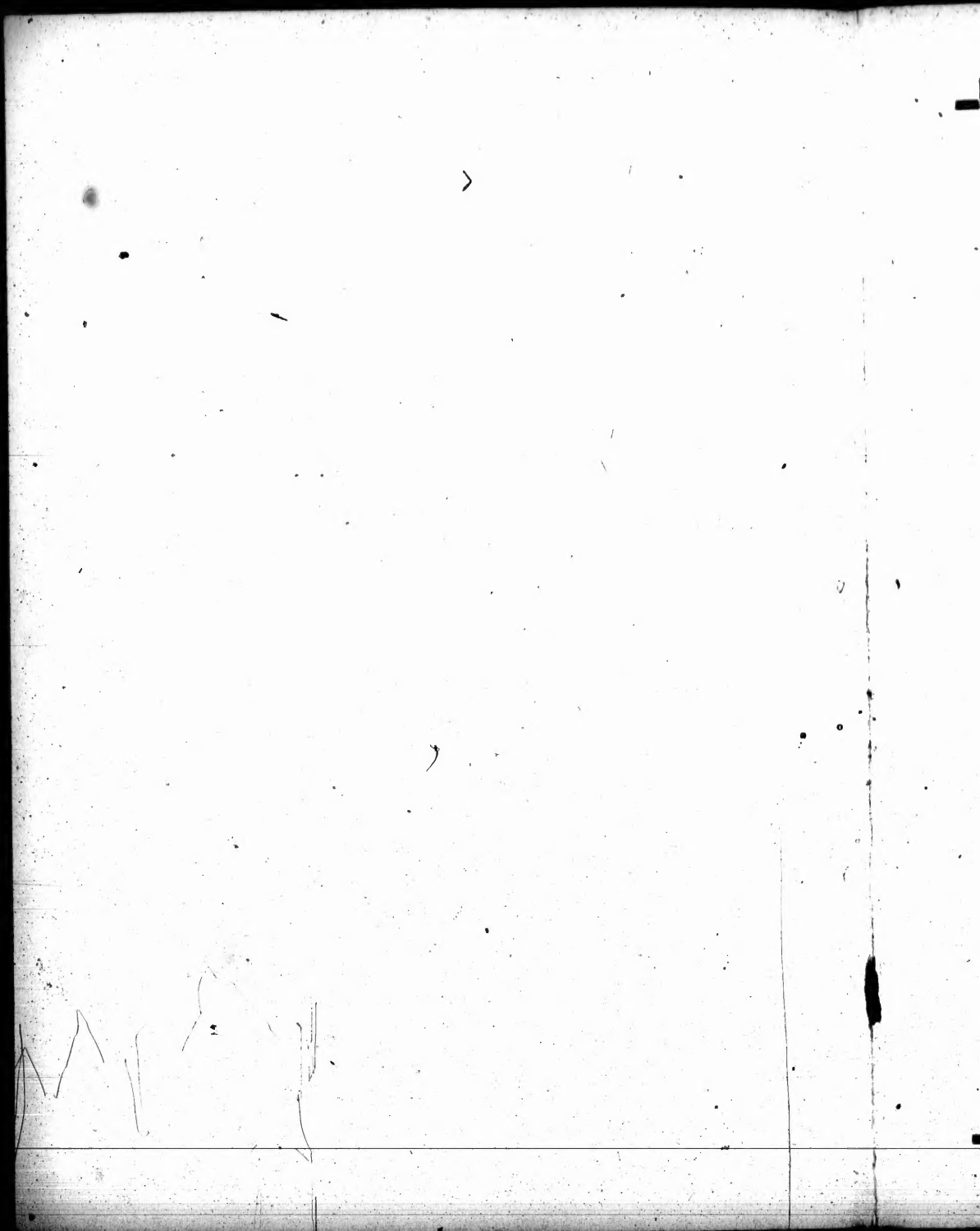
ON THE EVENING OF

EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 1ST, 1877,

BY REV. C. BRISTOL, M. A.,

MINISTER OF THE METHODIST CHURCH OF CANADA.

For our conversation is in Heaven; from whence, also, we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.—Phil. 3: 20, 21.



THERE are many subjects in the Bible calculated to edify and comfort on solemn occasions like the present; none better adapted to promote these desirable ends than a contemplation of the happy estate of the righteous dead. A branch of that subject is presented for our consideration this evening. The word "conversation" was employed in a larger sense by our English translators than it expresses at present. It is nearly synonymous with "conduct" in the text, and many other passages, as, "Let your conversation be as cometh the Gospel." The first clause of the text may be very fitly rendered—"We conduct ourselves as citizens of heaven." We expect the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from that bright abode in the glory of the Father to receive us to himself.

The wonderful transformation of the text supposes, and will be preceded by the second coming of Christ, and by the resurrection of the dead. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul has been held with more or less distinctness even by the heathen world; that of the body exclusively by those favored with the direct revelations of the Sacred Scriptures.

The future happy existence of the *body* as well as the *soul* was impressively taught to the early generations by the translations of Enoch and Elijah. Job living probably about the time of the Hebrew patriarchs, exclaims "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my *flesh* I shall see God." Isaiah—"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell; for the dew is as the dew of herbs and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Daniel is very clear: "And many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame

and everlasting contempt." And yet more distinctly significant are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: "The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." The Apostle Paul's sublime discourse in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians, illustrating the resurrection of the just, may aid us in rising to a conception of the climax of the passage before us, "The glorious or glorified body of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our bodies in this world are "vile" or humbled bodies. They are sown or laid in the grave in "corruption," "dishonor," "weakness," and as "natural" or animal bodies. They are raised "immortal," "glorious," "powerful" and "spiritual" bodies.

How wonderful the change! Nature may aid us in its conception: The water lily appears at first as an unsightly bulb, surrounded by the slime and mud of the marsh. When it reaches the surface of the water it casts down its outer coating, as it were a dividing line between its former and its subsequent life, and now it unfolds its beautiful flower, sends up its stamens, matures its pollen, fills the air with its sweetness and appears a thing of beauty. As the unsightly bulb to the beautiful flower, so is the humbled body of the present to the resurrection body of the future. You have often brushed the caterpillar from your person with a shudder. It is loathsome at best—more so as it grows old—its hairs become fewer, it is less active, it crawls out of sight, makes its own shroud, and remains for a time quite torpid. Behold the change as now its shell is burst and it arises on gorgeous wings, no longer to crawl on the earth, it flits from flower to flower, sipping nectar and spending a quite different and joyous existence in sunshine. As the poor worm to the butterfly so is the body of the present to that of the future. As the seed to the full grown plant, as the star to the bright sun, so is the terrestrial body

to the celestial. Dying, behold we die ! How many the diseases, how constant the tendency to corruption in our present state. It is not easy to conceive of bodies in a state of entire incorruptibility. Matter undergoes wonderful changes in this world, and may be capable of yet greater changes. From the rough shell the beautiful pearl is exuded. The many colored and brilliant diamond adorning kings' crowns, is the same in substance as common coal.

How indestructible is gold, and platinum is still more, so not yielding to the most powerful furnace heat until the additional strength of powerful acids is added. God will make our bodies altogether incorruptible and immortal. As free from decay after a million of ages as when they first enter upon the heavenly inheritance. Our bodies are humbled now by infirmity and sickness and connection with sin. But, oh, how humbled by death and dissolution ! They shall be "raised in glory." We shall be satisfied as to the soul when we awake with the divine likeness. "Beloved now are we the sons of God. And it doth not appear what we shall be but when He shall appear we shall be like him." This will satisfy the longings of our moral nature. But the body shall have a glory of its own corresponding to the glory of the spirit, and of the home in which it shall dwell.

"They that be wise shall shine with the brightness of the *firmament*, and they that turn many to righteousness as the *stars* forever and ever." Then, says our Lord, "shall the righteous *shine forth* as the *Sun* in the kingdom of their Father."

How great the weakness of the human body in this life, but in death its strength is all gone. It is sown in the grave "in weakness," it is "raised in *power*." How limited our power of locomotion compared to the desires of the mind ! As we shall be "like unto the angels," is it not probable we shall be favored with powers of locomotion similar to theirs ? Be able to pass from world to world even without the aid of an atmosphere like that

which surrounds our earth, or move on swift wing to distant parts of the universe to perform the behests of God.

And now our powers of vision are so limited, We supplement it with the microscope for minute objects, and with the telescope for very distant ones. May not the Divine Being give us powers of sight exceeding far our present power with the aid of both these combined? Who can tell how great the ken of an angel? How dull our perception of harmony! The nicer combinations and finer tones of music are lost upon us. May not God so heighten and perfect this power that every note from the whisper of love from the lips of some cherub babe, the slightest thrill of affection, to the thunder blast of Gabriel's trump, may be fully marked and appreciated though infinitely varied and combined? And may not the voice receive an exquisite and exalted power, to express all a glorified spirit may be capable of feeling or able to think?

How often do we find thoughts and feelings too big for utterance? It may be different with us there. What powers it may please Deity to bestow upon us there altogether new and additional to those we here possess we know not. They will no doubt be fully adequate to the exalted state for which they are designed. It certainly seems reasonable to believe that as rising from the inferior orders of creation, we find new and additional powers possessed by the superior orders, so when man is risen from the slumbers of the grave and permitted to enter upon so exalted a state he will be blessed with corresponding increase and exaltation of powers and functions of his material tenement. We now possess "natural" or animal bodies fitted to the present sphere of existence, placing us in relation to the natural and animal world. When raised they become *spiritual* bodies. Bodies still, but *spiritual*. Flesh and blood shall not in their present gross condition inherit the Kingdom of God. They "hunger no more," they "thirst no more." They are spiritual in adaptation to their spiritual tenents and

spiritual employ. Powers of digestion, circulation, respiration and assimilation will not be needed for bodies that know no decay, no loss. The mental machinery, the frame work with its coverings and limbs would seem to be all that will be requisite. We lay aside the animal and natural. "They neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are made like unto the angels."

"But these glorious resurrection bodies "are made like unto the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ." What do the Scriptures teach concerning this glorious model? It appeared as the temple of deity on the mount of transfiguration, when even "His raiment became white and glistening so that no fuller on earth could whiten them, and His countenance shone as the sun." The body of our Lord was doubtless glorified during its ascent from the disciples on the Mount of Olives, when the cloud, it may be of the heavenly hosts received Him out of their sight.

It was then "changed in a moment," in the twinkling of an eye, as the last generation of saints shall be. The glory of His body appeared for a moment to Saul as he journeyed to Damascus, when he saw a light above the brightness of an Asiatic sun. Again, on Patmos Isle, John being in the spirit on the Lord's day "saw in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man clothed in a garment down to the foot, and girt about with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass as though they burned in a furnace."

To be made like unto this glorious body, without doubt, includes freedom from all infirmity and from everything of deformity or defect such as frequently belongs to us here as the result of sin, of disease, or misfortune. This model includes perfect beauty, perfect health, perfect endurance as well as eternal youthfulness. What joy to the lame, the halt, the blind, the deaf, the dumb and all the afflicted? Their affliction shall not pass the grave.

To all objections to the doctrine of the resurrection and the glorious transformation of which we have now been discoursing we have but one answer. It is "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." We look out and up at the glorious Sun as he shines in the centre of his system of planets,—worlds on worlds in their magnificent grandeur rolling round him. He many times larger than they all. We think of the power and working that first kindled that vast ball of light and heat, and has maintained it ever since in undiminished splendor and power, without any known increase or diminution for thousands of ages; thus making him the fairest natural image of the immutable, "the father of lights." We say the power and working competent to perform such an amazing task, is amply sufficient to accomplish the wonders of the resurrection.

But who are they for whom this glory of bodily and spiritual existence is in reserve? Our text replies they who "converse as citizens of heaven." Those who conduct themselves during this probationary life as citizens of that better country to which so many of our dear friends are being removed. Heaven is a city. "Being justified by His grace we are made heirs" fit "according to the hope of eternal life." "If children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ." Like *on* in water we are *in* this world but not *of it*. We feel we belong to a nobler world. We are all sinners. We need a radical change. "Ye must be born again." "Except ye be converted and become as little children—teachable, docile—ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Those who through repentance towards God are the subjects of this gracious change show it by *self denial*. They "deny themselves all ungodliness and worldly lusts." Besides many things are presented to us from day to day, pleasing to our tastes and harmless in themselves, yet hindering us in the performance of our duty—preventing the intimacy of our communion with God—hindering our usefulness to others, our ministrations to

the sick and needy. They are given up. We practice the lessons of self-denial in relation to them. We please not ourselves, in these things, but placing our eyes on the higher spiritual good, give up the temporal for the spiritual. "We look not on the things that are seen but on those things which are not seen, for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal."

The heirs of the *better* world overcome *this* world. "Ye," says Jesus to His disciples, "are not of the world." "The world hateth you." "All that is in the world" says John, "the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life is not of the Father." The world is an alien element opposed to the Christian. When we walk according to the course of this world" we "walk according to the prince of the power of the air," for He is the God of this world."

"Be not conformed to this world," is an inspired injunction. The maxims of the spirit of this world are not in harmony with the will of God. *They are selfish and evil. His will is good and acceptable and perfect.* The worldling seeks only perishable wealth, the Christian imperishable—a treasure unfading in the heavens. The man of the world seeks as the chief concern of life to be rich in houses, lands, gold and silver; the Christian to be "rich in faith," "rich towards God," "rich in good works." The worldling's pleasures are those of sense and earth. They are like himself; of the earth, earthy.

The pleasures of the Christian are spiritual, growing out of his relation to God and things divine, and hallowing and refining his earthly joys. The honor of the man of the world is such as comes from his fellow man only, the Christian's is from above. "If any man serve me," says the Saviour, "Him will my Father honor." "Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world." The world is overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

As citizens of the world above the law of that world is our rule. It is spotlessly holy. Its inhabitants are robed in white, the emblem of their purity. They continually ascribe praise and honor, and dominion, to Him who washed them in His own blood. Nothing that is unclean can enter there. Christians, therefore, "cleanse themselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and of the spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." They inscribe holiness unto the Lord on their banner.

The heirs of heaven set their affections on things above. They look upon heaven as their *home*—the *family home*, where there shall be the most blessed and eternal union and communion of loved ones. The innocent loves of this world shall survive the tomb. Our affection for father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all the dear relatives of life, shall not be destroyed by death. How delightful, after long weary journeyings and tedious absence, to be welcomed home by those who love us.

How joyous the sailor after his voyages, the soldier after his campaigns, to be clasped in the embraces of those who so often have strained their eyes to catch a first glimpse of his return. And surely our loved ones will be the first to welcome us to heaven. How joyous *their* congratulations; how blessed *their* welcomes; but the sweetest welcome of all will be from Him, the man of sorrows, who travailed in birth for our souls, who there sees the fruit of His soul travail with infinite satisfaction. As citizens of heaven we love to think and speak of our future home, and anticipate the glory and joy of our reunion with those whose removal we now mourn.

As the summer wanes, birds of passage are found pluming their wings, circling in long flight, and gathering in still increasing numbers, preparatory to their flight to the sunny South.

As life wears away, we should be thinking of and preparing for our flight to the realms of eternal sunshine.

We should show we are citizens of Heaven by our *loyalty* to Jesus, Heaven's King—our zeal and love for his cause—our noble courage in standing up for Him. God has not given us the spirit of fear, *but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

And now relative to the deceased, I have but little to say, and indeed little needs to be said. My acquaintance with her was brief, but very pleasing. I learn she was converted to God early in life, in her own native Devonshire, England, in connection with a branch of the great Methodist family. For nearly fifty years she walked with God—having, indeed, her seasons of greater or less spirituality of mind—not always so intimate communion with God and His people as she desired, and yet persevering to the end.

How pleasing to know that He who visited her in early life and gave her the pledge of His love, was with her in old age and feebleness. How delightful to know that the lamp that was kindled towards the beginning of the journey, supplied with fresh oil, shed its bright light upon her pathway through the dark valley, and was found trimmed and burning when she heard the cry, "behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him!" How comforting to know that the faithful covenant keeping God in whose hand she placed hers at the beginning, was with her in the six troubles of life, and in the seventh did not forsake her. Her confidence in the atonement was calm and complete from the first of her illness, and remained unshaken to the close. She rested in the will of God—was willing on account of those she loved to live if such had been the will of her Lord, yet especially towards the close of her illness, longed to get away, and rose at times to holy joy in anticipation of Heaven.

She is with the Lord.

You may apply the subject of the discourse. Those feet which so often went on errands of love for *you*, her companion,

her sons and daughters, and friends, though now they return to dust, *shall stand on Mount Zion*. Those dear hands so actively engaged for you during life, though now they moulder in the grave, shall again, if you are faithful, clasp yours. Those arms shall again embrace you upon a breast that shall not again be heaved by a sigh. That brow shall be encircled by a crown of life. Those eyes which so often shone upon you with tender affection, shall again speak the language of love; and the tongue that is silent and cold, tell of Jesus' love more sweetly than ever upon earth.

Your beloved companion—your mother—shall rise from the tomb, *her body* shall be made like unto the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What now, need I further say, dear friends, but to urge the exhortation—conduct yourselves, from this time, as you desire to meet your mother, your companion,—*conduct yourselves as citizens of Heaven*. Feel that earth is not your home. Seek, in *just now* giving yourselves to God through Christ, to be citizens of that better country, and daily live in *self-denial above the world—in holiness—in loyalty to Christ your King—in zeal for his cause* and love for the souls of your fellows. In holy courage and perseverance follow Christ, your head, to Heaven. Follow the dear one whose remains you have just followed to the tomb, as she followed Christ.

And may we all who are here assembled, who have this year been called to follow so many faithful ones to the grave, be led earnestly to “redeem the time seeing the days are evil,” and “apply our hearts unto wisdom.” May we with primitive Christians be enabled to say:

Our conversation is in Heaven, from whence, also, we expect the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

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